

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 308 169

SP 031 261

AUTHOR Lapchick, Richard E.
TITLE Pass to Play: Student Athletes and Academics.
INSTITUTION National Education Association, Washington, D.C.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-8106-3339-6
PUB DATE 89
NOTE 51p.
AVAILABLE FROM NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven,
CT 06516 (stock no. 3339-6; \$6.95).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Standards; *Athletes; Basketball; Black
Students; Football; *High Risk Students; High
Schools; *High School Students; Illiteracy; Minority
Groups; *State Standards
IDENTIFIERS *No Pass No Play Rules

ABSTRACT

This monograph focuses on the virtually ignored issues of the academic problems of high school athletes. All the problems of college sport exist at the high school level. For example, "redshirting" occurs when a school has an athlete sit out a year so that the athlete can mature physically and have four years of eligibility. This problem exists in the secondary grades as well as in colleges. The ramifications of the National Collegiate Athletic Association's Proposition 48 are discussed as they have an impact on students at both high school and college level. The legal aspects of "No Pass No Play" policies in Texas and other areas are discussed. Recommendations are made for higher academic requirements for talented student athletes. Current state academic requirements for athletes are listed and references are included. (JD)

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PASS TO PLAY:

Student Athletes and Academics

Richard L. Tapchick

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Richard E. Lapchick

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Washington, D.C.

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Printing History
First Printing: May 1989

Note

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lapchick, Richard E.

Pass to play : student athletes and academics / Richard E.

Lapchick

p. cm. — (analysis and action series)

Bibliography: p.

ISBN 0-8106-3339-6

1. School sports—United States. 2. Athletes—Education—United States. 3. College sports—United States. I. National Education Association of the United States. II. Title. III. Series.

GV346.L37 1989

796'.07'1173—dc19

88-35953
CIP



CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Fred Buttlr and the Tougher Road	6
Symptoms of the Illness	9
The Typical Student Athlete	12
Problems: The Revenue Sports	12
Black and Minority Athletes	13
Proposition 48.....	15
College Level	15
Freshman Eligibility.....	18
High School Level	19
Freshman Adjustments	19
No Pass, No Play.....	20
In Texas	20
Legal Action	20
Public Opinion	21
Second-Year Results	24
Student Athletes and the C Average	25
In Other Areas	27
Los Angeles and Orange County	27
Savannah-Chatham County, Georgia.....	29
Prince George's County, Maryland.....	30
Higher Standards and the Future	31
Appendixes.....	35
A. State Academic Requirements for High School Athletic Eligibility	35
B. National Board on Increased Academic Standards for Athletes	38
References.....	41
Suggested Readings	44
Books	44
Articles and Manuscripts	46

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INTRODUCTION

The worst tragedies are the 99 out of 100 high school athletes who will not get a chance to play at a Division I college. If these young people lose their opportunity for an education by succumbing to the pressures to produce athletically, then their futures are in great jeopardy.

The American jock is alive but not well. Many athletes are alive on the playing fields but dying slow deaths in the streets. The more than 250 athletes who have gotten in trouble with the law in 1987-88 attest to this growing nightmare. Since all these athletes are products of our educational system, educators are increasingly asking, What are we doing wrong?

Have we created the image of the "dumb jock"? Do we expect less of athletes than of other students? Have we done athletes a favor by granting them special treatment that asked less of them academically than we ask of other students? Why do some people express surprise when an athlete sounds intelligent? Educators are wondering if they create their own self-fulfilling prophecies when they do not expect it.

This monograph focuses on the virtually ignored issue of the academic problems of high school athletes. With so much attention given to the problems of professional athletes in trouble with the law, and universities in trouble with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), it is easy to forget that all those pros and collegiate athletes were produced by our high school system.

Have millions of America's youth *lost their chance* for a meaningful education because they bought the dream that they will beat the 10,000 to 1 odds and become a pro? Too many of these young people waste their educational opportunities by pursuing eligibility rather than educational skills.

The worst tragedies are the 99 out of 100 high school athletes

who will not get a chance to play at a Division I college (1).^{*} If these young people lose their opportunity for an education by succumbing to the pressures to produce athletically, then their futures are in great jeopardy. As educators, we need to focus on how to empower them to remain student athletes instead of just athletes.

FRED BUTTLER AND THE TOUGHER ROAD

Fred Buttler's story is only one tragic example of a young man who did not make it as a professional athlete and paid the price for failing to receive a proper education.

As a student at Warren Lane Elementary School in Inglewood, California, Fred possessed outstanding athletic potential. He was clearly the best athlete in his grade. In fact, he beat older children at virtually every sport he decided to try. While Fred was exceling on the athletic field, however, his mother noticed that he was not capable of doing his daily homework assignments. She asked that he be held back in the third grade in order to have the chance to improve his weak reading skills. Her request was denied, and he was promoted to the fourth grade.

Two years later, Mrs. Buttler questioned school officials when they promoted Fred to Monroe Junior High School after the sixth grade. She was told that he was progressing at a normal pace, and that she need not be concerned.

At Monroe, Fred was an immediate football star but still could not read. He and four other athletes sat in shock one day when they were told they were "just too bright to be in the eighth grade" and, therefore, they were being skipped into Morningside High after the seventh grade. Mrs. Buttler complained to the Monroe administration that it was not fair to send a student who could not read to high school. She was told that the move was being made "in Fred's best interest."

In his three years at Morningside, Fred accumulated a C+ average while never opening a book. There was no need to do so since all his teachers made special "arrangements" for the star football player. Sometimes he handed in blank exams only to have

^{*}Numbers in parentheses appearing in the text refer to the References beginning on page 41.

them returned with all the correct answers. At other times he was given oral exams that he always seemed to pass despite ignorance of the subject matter. Most of the time he did not have to take exams. There was no point. He could not read them.

Fred told *New Times Magazine* (2) that his teachers always made him feel good and gave him confidence that he would make the pros. "No matter how much trouble I had understanding things in class, I always figured I would make a good living playing ball for the pros . . . Football was just going to make me famous. And I knew I wasn't just dreaming because everyone told me I was good."

When Fred graduated from Morningside he was reading at second-grade level—about the same level as several years earlier when his mother requested that he be held back in the third grade. Paul Moore (who will be discussed later) was reading at the same level in the tenth grade when his coach discovered his reading disability and sent him off in a positive, corrective direction.

Not so with Fred Buttler. Despite the fact that he could not read the playbook, he received a scholarship from El Camino Junior College. At El Camino, he took "activity classes" and somehow managed to maintain his eligibility. As a cornerback on the football team, Fred helped lead El Camino to two outstanding seasons. He assumed that after two more years of college he would end up with a pro football contract.

After completing his two-year stay at El Camino, Fred decided to attend California State University, Los Angeles (L.A. State). His junior college adviser spent two days filling out his complicated admission and grant-in-aid forms. Promised remedial reading help at L.A. State, which he never received, Fred noted, "I think some of the coaches were probably happy I couldn't read because that meant I wouldn't waste time on schoolwork since that way I could concentrate on playing for them."

During his first year and a half at L.A. State, the dream continued. He maintained a C+ average and played well. But as his eligibility ran out at the end of the fall semester, so did the faculty's great interest and support. Suddenly the C+ former football star was a failing student who was flunked out of L.A. State within months. In the end, Fred Buttler had no degree, no offers to play pro football, and no skills to use for gainful employment.

And he still could not read. He became a factory worker and lived with his parents.

Further tragedy entered Fred's life when he was involved in the shooting of his father. Fred was arrested for his death but was soon released from jail when charges were dropped after the shooting was determined to be accidental. When he went to the cemetery after his release, he could not find his father's grave because he could not read the signs.

When Fred Buttler found himself unable to realize his dream of becoming a professional football player, he had nowhere to turn; he found the doors tightly locked. Assuming that football would be his ticket to the "big-time," he had allowed himself to be academically exploited throughout his youth. Perhaps, if in return for his outstanding athletic contributions Buttler had demanded a quality education, his story might have had a happier ending.

Now that a decade has passed since the L.A. State experience, neither Fred Buttler nor his mother could be located. Nor could anyone at Warren Lane Elementary, Monroe Junior High, or Morningside High provide any information about Fred. It was as if he never existed—a fate that happens to so many athletes who do not get an education.

Although such unfortunate experiences are not limited to Black athletes, the greatest impact is on those for whom sports seems to be the only way to emerge from poverty. Whites are more likely to be supported in their dreams of athletic glory with a quality education. Education is the only insurance policy against these dreams not coming true, or ending abruptly like those of Fred Buttler.

SYMPTOMS OF THE ILLNESS

All the problems of college sport exist at the high school level. "Redshirting," for example, occurs when a school has an athlete sit out a year so that the athlete can mature physically and *then* have four years of eligibility. Redshirting of college athletes is now common and accepted. It has been occasionally reported that parents regularly redshirt promising eighth graders in "football states" like Georgia and Oklahoma. In fact, according to Richard Neal, executive director of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association, eighth graders are being redshirted in New York, Massachusetts, California, and in every corner of the United States (3).

In most parts of the country, higher minimum academic standards for athletes are a distant goal (4). As recently as 1983, less than 100 of the 16,000 school districts in the United States had such standards (5). As late as 1986, New York, Maine, Maryland, and Minnesota had no statewide standards whatsoever (6).

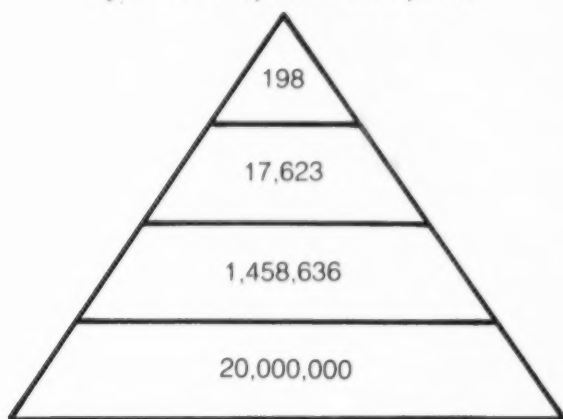
For elite athletes, high school sports seasons in some states are frequently yearlong, regardless of whether the sport is in season or out of season. The three-letter athlete is a part of history. Thus, year-round time reduces the high school athlete's opportunities to study.

From Alaska to Vermont, some coaches, driven by a complex set of motivating factors, are clearly exploiting their athletes. Such problems may not seem to affect athletes in states without professional franchises or even big-time university athletics of the kind where corruption runs rampant.

No region is immune from the sports madness that has swept the nation. While everyone seems to want to play, however, the number of participants is dramatically narrowed as athletes attempt to climb the sports pyramid. (See Figure 1.) Twenty million students compete in youth sport programs (7). At the high school level, 3.3 million boys and 1.8 million girls play high school sports, with 953,506 boys playing football and 505,130 boys playing basketball (8). Only 17,623 play men's Division I college football and basketball, the sports most identified with the scandals (9). (See Table 1.) Less than 3,500 people in the entire

United States earn a living playing professional sports. Approximately 198 football and basketball players make it every year. That large pyramid has a very narrow point at the top. Too many of our students are lost, educationally, while trying to scale its steep and slippery walls.

Figure 1
Pyramid of Sports Participants



Pyramid represents approximate numbers of those competing—from base up—in youth sport, in high school football and basketball, in college football and basketball; and those who make pro football and basketball each year.

Table 1. U.S. Athletes at Different Levels of Sport in 1986

	High School	Div. I/IA	Div. IAA	Div. II	Div. III	All NCAA	Pros
Basketball	505,130	4,471	—	3,284	6,176	13,931	48
%	—	.008%	—	.006%	.012%	.027%	1/10,523
No. of schools	17,769	283		184	292	759	
Football	953,506	13,152	9,166	10,953	17,486	50,757	192
%	—	.013%	.009%	.011%	.018%	.053%	1/4,966
No. of schools	13,854	105	88	114	202	509	
Baseball	393,905	10,284	—	4,615	7,405	22,304	n/a
%	—	.026%	—	.011%	.018%	.056%	
No. of schools	14,067	265	—	141	251	657	
Hockey	23,558	2,140	—	540	2,011	4,691	n/a
%	—	.090%	—	.022%	.085%	.199%	
No. of schools	865	51	—	15	59	125	

Sources: National Federation of State High School Associations, National Collegiate Athletic Association, National Basketball Association and the NBA Players Association, National Football League and NFL Players Association.

THE TYPICAL STUDENT ATHLETE

As will be demonstrated, academic problems for athletes occur almost exclusively in the revenue sports of football and basketball. Contrary to the public's image, most student athletes perform academically as well as or better than other students at both the college and high school levels. Engagement in the community life at both levels through sports appears to lead to a deeper involvement in school work in general.

According to a 1988 study by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), male athletes did as well academically as nonathletes (10). The most recently available NCAA study examining male athletes enrolled in 1975 showed that 52 percent graduated by 1981, compared with 41.5 percent of nonathletes who enrolled in the same year. Another 12.9 percent of the athletes were still pursuing their degrees (11).

A U.S. Department of Education analysis of 30,000 high school sophomores and 28,000 seniors demonstrated that high school athletes outperform nonathletes academically. The study found that 88 percent of varsity athletes had better than a 2.0 (C) grade point average (gpa), while 30 percent of all students had below a C average (12).

PROBLEMS: THE REVENUE SPORTS

What is misleading, however, is the fact that the figures for colleges and high schools are for all sports. It is widely acknowledged that most of the educational problems of athletes are in football and basketball, the revenue sports. A *USA Today* survey showed that only 27 percent of Division I basketball players who had enrolled between 1972 and 1973 and 1981 and 1982 had graduated by 1985 (13). Estimates are that 30 percent of Division IA football players graduate.

But the most frightening data shows that the illiteracy rate for high school football and basketball players is estimated to be a debilitating 25 to 30 percent—more than twice the national average for high school seniors. Since only 1 in 100 will receive a scholarship to play Division I college sports, what have we really prepared these student athletes to do?

BLACK AND MINORITY ATHLETES

The biggest victim is the Black athlete. Society's promise that sports will lift Black youth from poverty to riches and fame is a cruel illusion. Parents, coaches, and administrators buy the media package and encourage the illusion. Finally, the athletes themselves squander educational opportunities to the glittering dream of the sporting arena. The dream goes like this: Even if I don't make the pros, I'll at least get a college degree.

A study of college freshmen entering in 1977 by the Educational Testing Service for the NCAA showed that of 1,359 Black athletes and 4,067 white athletes, only 31 percent of Blacks graduated after six years compared with 53 percent of whites (14). The figures for Black basketball and football players were much worse—only 20 percent graduated. Moreover, the majority of the Blacks who graduated received their degrees in physical education, sports administration, and communications (15). All the information on Black opportunities in these fields (released after the controversy resulting from Al Campanis's appearance on "Nightline") showed that Blacks, with or without degrees, are virtually shut out of these areas. In the post-Campanis climate, the statistics are staggering.

Racial hiring practices at the pro level are now well documented, yet hiring practices of colleges in sport are worse than in pro sport and nearly as bad as for college faculties. For example, a survey of 278 Division I, IA, and IAA schools revealed that a mere 42 (3.9 percent) of 1,102 head coaching positions in men's and women's basketball, football, track and field, and baseball are filled by Blacks, while only 192 (3.1 percent) of more than 6,000 assistant coaches in these sports are Black (16).

An emphasis on courses that will lead to continued eligibility is not, however, limited to Black athletes. A 1986 study of 130 Division I basketball programs indicated widespread patterns of clustering. (Clustering takes place when at least 25 percent of a team's players major in a subject whose majors account for less than 5 percent of the student body as a whole.) This study found that a full two-thirds of all programs showed clustering. It was more common for men than women, for Blacks than whites, and for ranked than nonranked programs (17).

At the high school level, only 67 percent of Black and Hispanic

male varsity athletes had better than a 2.0 grade point average compared with 88 percent of all varsity athletes (18).

Although little data exists documenting what courses high school athletes take, it is widely assumed that high school athletes in football and basketball are steered into courses that will keep them eligible while not necessarily preparing them to be good students in college. In the Philadelphia Public League, for example, where more than 60 percent of the players are Black, an athlete needs a D+ (1.5 grade point average) to be eligible. Of the graduating seniors in this league, 51.3 percent did not meet the new eligibility requirements under Proposition 48 (discussed below). In the entire Philadelphia area, however, where the suburbs are predominantly white, slightly more than 93 percent of the athletes met the new requirements (19).

PROPOSITION 48

COLLEGE LEVEL

The thunder began as scandal after scandal unraveled at big-time sports schools. In 1983, under the leadership of the Presidents' Commission (a group composed of 44 college presidents), the NCAA developed Proposition 48. Under this rule, in order to be eligible to play a sport in the freshman year in any NCAA Division I or IA program, an incoming college freshman must have (1) maintained a C high school average in 11 core curriculum courses, and (2) scored a minimum of 700 on the combined verbal and math sections of the SAT or of 15 on the ACT.

The new standards referred only to the athlete's academic record in high school. While the core curriculum and grade point standards won widespread approval, the requirements for minimum scores on standardized tests angered Black educators and civil rights leaders. Most educators agree that standardized achievement tests are culturally and racially biased. Black leaders charged that Proposition 48 would limit Black athletes' opportunities to obtain college athletic scholarships.

An NCAA study undertaken in 1983, before the implementation of Proposition 48, seemed to bear out that fear. The study showed that six out of seven Black male basketball players and three out of four Black male football players at the nation's largest schools would have been ineligible as freshmen in 1983. At the same time, one out of three white male basketball players and one out of two white male football players would have been ineligible (20).

When implemented in the fall of 1986, however, Proposition 48 actually sidelined far fewer athletes. Overall, less than 10 percent of football players and only 13 percent of basketball players had to sit out. Whereas the NCAA study predicted that more than 80 percent of Black athletes would be ineligible, less than 20 percent were in fact ineligible in 1986.

The 1987-88 figures were no less dramatic. In a survey of all Division I schools (with 202 responses) only 5.9 percent of all enrolled freshmen were either partial qualifiers (4.5 percent) or non-

qualifiers (1.4 percent). The figures were predictably higher in football (34 percent of all partial qualifiers) and basketball (13 percent of partial qualifiers). Of the 1,282 Black football and basketball players, 199 were partial or nonqualifiers. That figure represented only 15.5 percent of Blacks in the revenue sports, however (21).

While Proposition 48 continues to take a disproportionately heavier toll of Blacks than of whites (58 of 60 in basketball and 141 of 152 in football), the 15.5 percent is about one-fifth of the number predicted in the NCAA study. The primary Black educator who supported the rule was Harry Edwards, the noted advocate of a meaningful education for athletes. While Edwards said the standards were still too low, he felt "It's going to communicate to a generation of Black athletes that we expect you to perform academically as well as athletically." But, he hastened to add,

Proposition 48 is not going to do too much, because not very much is demanded. We're looking at the most minimum kinds of academic standards. What the NCAA is really doing is not putting forth standards conducive to education. What they are saying is you cannot come on campus and be functionally illiterate. (22)

While the greatest test of the utility of Proposition 48 will come when the graduation rate of the 1986-87 freshman class is determined, it is impressive to note the short-term effect on those who entered in 1986.

If the statistics in the NCAA study had held for 1986-87 Division I and IA freshmen, then the figures would have looked like those in Table 2.

Thus, even though many of those declared ineligible in 1986 said they were not given sufficient notice of the impending standards, enough were warned so that 644% more football players and 453% more basketball players were eligible than would have been projected. A cautionary note—the figures that might show how many students did not go to Division I and IA schools because of Proposition 48 are not available. Even so, it would seem that Jack Davis, then NCAA President, was prophetic when he said that "Proposition 48 is a way to hold the feet of inner-city and rural schools to the fire" (23). He felt it would be a club for the high schools to use to motivate athletes to be better students.

Once again, the predictions of disaster for athletes who were

Table 2. Projected vs. Actual Ineligible
Division I and IA Freshmen Under Proposition 48

	Projected Ineligible Based on NCAA Study	Actual Ineligible Based on 1986 Enrollments
Football	1,150 (58% of total— 75% of Blacks and 50% of whites) +	206 (9% of total)
Basketball	587 (59% of total— 85.7% of Blacks and 33% of whites)*	137 (13% of total)

+ Assuming 70% white, 30% Black totals

* Assuming 50% white, 50% Black totals

asked to do more proved false. The words of Harry Edwards that the standards were too low also sound prophetic.

Many of the sidelined athletes also viewed the rule positively and philosophically. DePaul's Curtis Jackson noted, "I have grown a lot; I'm hungry and the experience has been positive. . . A lot of good things have been happening here"(24).

Keith Robinson of Notre Dame thought it would be a good thing in the long run, but members of the first group were victims of poor information and preparation:

I think the test is O.K., but they should have put it in effect two years down the line to give these young kids a chance to really get prepared. A lot of kids whose parents aren't wealthy are spending a lot of time playing basketball. Somebody tells you this is the way out, so you play. You hit the books, but you don't really throw yourself into them because you're working on your game. (25)

Rumeal Robinson of Michigan said that initially he was crushed by the news and the thought of not playing basketball competitively for the first time since the seventh grade. He looked at community side effects:

It was embarrassing. I don't know if it was necessary to publicize the scores the way they did. It sort of puts a stigma on athletes that's not really accurate. One time I went back home and this little kid I used to coach came up to me in the park and said, "Rumeal, I heard you were dumb."

I hit the books in high school. I had a B average. The SAT was just that much farther advanced. I did all right on the verbal part, but there were some things on the math that I'd never seen before. (26)

Parents, too, were drawn into the controversy. In Robinson's case, his mother was in favor of the rule:

Of course, I would have liked for him to pass, but my gut feeling is that I'm happy Rumeal didn't make the score. . . . This was a blessing in disguise—number one because you have to learn to cope with disappointment in life. I also don't think freshmen should be eligible to play any sport their first year.

I don't care who the athlete is or where he comes from, college isn't like high school. Freshmen need a year to acclimate themselves to college life. Rumeal has a dream, he wants to be a pro ballplayer, and this is a step in that direction. The first thing is education. (27)

Freshman Eligibility

Ms. Robinson brings up one of the most widely debated reforms proposed today: the entire question of freshman eligibility.

A combined study by the American College Testing Program, the College Board, and the Educational Testing Service showed that freshman scholarship athletes perform as well as freshman nonathletes (28). In spite of these results, there is a lingering doubt that freshmen, especially football and basketball players, should play.

The argument against allowing freshmen to play holds that it is difficult enough for the average freshman to adjust to the new freedoms and responsibilities associated with college life. Add the pressures of playing in front of thousands of fans and television cameras, and the adjustment is much more difficult. If all freshmen were ineligible, the racial issue also would be removed from Proposition 48.

The primary impetus to end freshman eligibility is coming from Big Ten administrators and some coaches. According to Minnesota Vice President Frank Wilderson, "We should let freshmen have a chance to get a footing academically" (29). University of Miami President Edward T. Foote believes that a freshman should not practice football "before he knows where the library is, before he knows where the first class is" (30). And Illinois football coach Mike White agrees "that there are pressures with football with our spring practices and then the practices in the fall that make it extremely difficult on first-year players" (31).

HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

Freshman Adjustments

Although there has been no study or discussion of the subject, recent data indicates that high school freshmen do suffer academically in the transition to their new level of schooling. So-called no-pass, no-play standards, which will be discussed at length, have had their greatest impact on freshman and junior varsity athletes. Texas House Bill 72, the first-in-the-nation legislation (in 1985), provides an indication. In Dallas, as in the state as a whole, more than twice as many freshman football players as varsity athletes were ineligible in 1985. As Table 3 shows, in 1986, in basketball, the percentage of ineligible freshmen was almost three times that of ineligible varsity players; in football, almost four times as many freshmen as varsity players had to sit out the six-week marking period.

Table 3. Percentages of Athletes
Ineligible under No-Pass, No-Play Legislation In Dallas Schools

	% Ineligible 1985	% Ineligible 1986
Football		
Varsity	16%	7.2%
Jr. Varsity	38.8%	21.8%
Freshman	37.3%	28.3%
Basketball		
Varsity	(unavailable)	9.1%
Jr. Varsity	"	19.4%
Freshman	"	24.5%

Source: *Dallas Morning News*, October 17, 1986 (football), and December 3, 1986 (basketball). Reprinted with permission.

NO PASS, NO PLAY

IN TEXAS

If Proposition 48 seemed controversial on the college level, no pass, no play at the high school level became a political maelstrom. After the publication of the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), Texas Governor Mark White appointed a Special Committee on Public Education. Led by H. Ross Perot, the committee developed a \$2.7 billion reform package. Its most controversial part was the no-pass, no-play provision, stipulating that participation in an extracurricular activity would be contingent on receiving a passing grade of at least 70 in every class. An ineligible athlete would have to sit out six weeks, a large percentage of the season.

The move was strongly opposed by coaches and then by parents. The coaches formed a political action committee to defeat the governor in his bid for reelection. While other factors were involved, part of White's defeat was attributable to the attack on him for his strong backing of House Bill 72.

On the national level, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFSHA), a coordinating body of all the individual state associations, vigorously objected to the strenuous standards of the Texas legislation. While supporting minimum standards, the Federation felt that the 70 average in each course was too high and the failure of even a single subject was too stringent.

When the results of the first grading period were announced, the heat was on high. Texas, where football is an exalted event, lost 19.7 percent of its football players for the six-week marking period (32); in the winter, it lost 18.9 percent of its basketball players. Parents of ineligible students demanded repeal of the legislation (33).

Legal Action

The parents went to court. Houston District Judge Marsha Anthony ruled the act unconstitutional on the grounds that it interfered with the family's Fourteenth Amendment rights of personal choice in family-related matters. Two ineligible baseball players

were thus able to play in the Texas state semifinals. When these players won, the parents of players on the losing team sued because of unfair competition. Orange District Judge David Dunn upheld the constitutionality of the act. After Attorney General Jim Mattox intervened, the Texas Supreme Court stayed Judge Anthony's ruling.

By the time the case got to the Texas Supreme Court, the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals had ruled on a similar question. West Virginia had a minimum *C average* for athletic participation (students could fail a course as long as their average was a C). The West Virginia court ruled that the state board of education had legitimately exercised its authority under its general supervisory powers over the educational system and that students had no fundamental right to participate in extracurricular activities (34).

The Texas Supreme Court agreed. It decided that the state's legislation provides a strong incentive for students wishing to participate in extracurricular activities to maintain minimum levels of performance in all their classes. Since the rule's objective was to promote improved classroom performance by students, the court found it "rationally related to the legitimate state interest in providing a quality education to Texas public school students" (35). The decision was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court but was dismissed for lack of a substantial federal question (36).

A recent Texas case vindicated a classroom teacher who refused to pass a star football player who was ineligible to play because he was failing her class. See page 22 for an account of this case.

Public Opinion

With judicial remedy out of the question, the next step was up to the proponents and opponents of the rule. Public opinion was sought and the results were surprising. Both sides maintained that their positions were supported by the U.S. Department of Education's study on extracurricular activity cited earlier. According to the study, only 12 percent of athletes nationwide would be ineligible with a C average (37).

Opponents said this finding showed that those who participated in extracurricular activities became better students, and loss of par-

Teacher Hails No-Pass Victory

Ruling Against Waco District Seen as Vindication

Associated Press

Waco—A teacher who refused last year to pass a star football player who was failing sociology says she is relieved that a jury ruled in her favor in a legal battle with the Waco Independent School District.

"I think I'm most pleased with the verdict," Sue Collins said Tuesday.

A federal jury on Friday awarded Ms. Collins \$77,000 in damages after it found violations of her First Amendment rights and of the state "whistleblowers" act.

In the middle of the 1987 football playoffs, the University Interscholastic League ruled that Waco High School star defensive end Trell Payne was ineligible to play because he had failed Ms. Collins' class. The football team, undefeated at the time, forfeited six games, the last of which was a playoff game.

The state's school reform law states that any student who fails a class is ineligible for extracurricular activities during the next six-week grading period.

Ms. Collins, 34, said Payne also had failed her course during the first six-week grading period but principal Wilbur Luce and football coach Johnny Tusa pressured her to pass him.

It was after Payne had failed the class in the second grading period that Ms. Collins said she approached the interscholastic league.

"I believe teachers are most concerned with fairness for all stu-

dents," she said, adding that passing a failing student only penalized those students who had achieved passing marks.

A teacher at Waco High School for 12 years, she said she was removed from the classroom. She said she was told to continue working at home—planning assignments and grading papers—as other teachers substituted in the classroom.

Later, school officials reassigned her to teaching ninth-grade physical science, a course she says she is not certified to teach.

Peter Rusek, attorney for the school district, said Superintendent James Hensley made the reassignment out of concern for Ms. Collins.

"The superintendent alone made the decision to reassign her because of the stir this whole thing created," Rusek said. "The students and parents were very upset with Ms. Collins."

Hensley and Luce, each of whom was ordered to pay Ms. Collins \$25,000 in punitive damages, did not return phone calls Tuesday.

The Texas State Teachers Association, which backed Ms. Collins in the case, hailed the jury's decision.

"It tells the teachers of Texas that they can't be forced to violate the rules, the law or their conscience," association president Charles Beard said.

Rusek said several legal issues must be resolved, including whether Ms. Collins will get her job back.

ticipation would discourage them and lead to decreased discipline and attendance problems, and possibly to grade inflation.

Brice B. Durbin, the executive director of NFSHA, emphatically stated that—

High school athletic and non-athletic activities are not only supportive of the academic mission of schools but ... are inherently educational and vital to the total development of students.

Activities are not extracurricular. They are the other half of education.

There is plenty of documented evidence...that participants usually attain better grades than non-participants ... have better retention rates and daily attendance records, and are involved in far less disciplinary problems than non-participating counterparts. (38)

The Federation (NFSHA) "recommend[ed] nationally that a student do only passing work in a minimum of four full-credit subjects and there is no higher qualitative standard or ineligibility for failing a course" (39).

Proponents claimed that their intent was not to exclude ineligible students from participation but to induce them to do better. Governor White used the analogy of a coach to make the point:

Coaches know that you get the best performance out of athletes by challenging them to do more than they've ever done before or thought they could achieve. A track coach doesn't set the bar for the high jump ... at a height the athlete has already cleared. The coach challenges the athlete by raising the bar higher than he has ever jumped before. And by raising the academic bar, we are finding that athletes can jump higher than they dreamed they could jump. (40)

But coaches were not necessarily moving to the governor's side. Gordon Wood, longtime coach at Brownwood High and a member of the Texas Athletic Hall of Fame, charged that—

It's not only no pass, no play, it's also no practice. As soon as you brand a kid a dummy one time, he is going to find other outlets, and he's going to get in with a gang or another group that are not going to be good for him. (41)

H. Ross Perot confronted this attitude head-on at the state coaches convention when he responded to such criticism as follows:

It's like saying if a boy is not on the team, he'll be out robbing 7-Eleven stores. It's a question of priorities. We will still have athletic teams, we will still have bands, but these won't become the forces that drive education. (42)

Public opinion, slow to start, began to grow in support of no pass, no play. A poll conducted by the Public Policy Laboratory at Texas A. & M. University showed that 73 percent of Texas residents favored the new law (43). Nationally, a Gallup Poll indicated that 90 percent of adults favored requiring a passing grade for athletic participation (44). A *U.S. News and World Report* survey showed 45 percent of student leaders favored restricting those with less than a C average. The Federation's own poll found that only 25 percent of the 7,000 high school juniors and seniors polled opposed the restrictions (45).

Second-Year Results

The climate became even more positive when the second-year results showed that, in fact, students who had been ineligible the first year had raised their grades and reclaimed eligibility by the following year. In Dallas, for example, the rate of ineligibility for varsity football players dropped from 16 percent in 1985 to 7.2 percent in 1986 (46). For basketball, 11.8 percent were ineligible in 1986 compared with 17.8 percent in 1985 (47). The results held true for the state. Texans expressed surprise. All the dire forecasts seemed unwarranted.

Texas coaches noted the good results. Spruce basketball coach Val Rhodes said he noticed the change in players' attitudes toward grades early in the season:

I get to school at 7:30 in the morning . . . And since kids can't go to the library or to the second or third floor that early, for security reasons, I find about seven or eight kids that I don't even teach saying, "Hey, can I come into your room to study?"

Also the teachers at Spruce—if a player has grade problems, or is acting up in class—the first person they get in touch with is the coach. And we'll have a conference with the teacher and the child, and call the parents if necessary. (48)

Madison basketball coach Ellis B. Kidd, who did not lose a varsity player during the grading period, attributed improvement to the players' awareness of the severity of the rule:

Last year, I don't think kids really believed what would happen to them if they failed. . . . Now, after seeing what happens, they believe. We encourage the kids, and try to have them attend tutoring sessions, but we've always done that. (49)

Roosevelt basketball coach Goree Johnson agreed, pointing out that a coach's influence cannot be overlooked:

Coaches are learning that it's just as important to teach in the classroom as it is on the court... I give my varsity from three until four o'clock every day to work on their studies, before going to practice. That gives the teachers a chance to work with them after school. I think coaches are emphasizing academics more than in the past.

We do a grade check every week. If we find a kid who is doing badly, we make him attend an early morning tutoring session. (50)

Johnson did not lose a single player.

School administrators echoed their feelings. George Reid, Dallas assistant superintendent for secondary schools, noted,

We're pleased with the results. It shows that with an all-out effort much progress can be made... Coaches and students, especially on the varsity, are taking the rule seriously and making a special effort to improve themselves. (51)

And Seagoville Principal Royce Larsen said:

I think the coaches started checking on their players real early this year, staying on top of it so things didn't get out of hand. Plus, I think the kids realized that this is the way it's going to be, and you have to pass or you'll be gone. (52)

Student Athletes and the C Average

Some of the statewide statistics were stunning. As Table 4 shows, the percentage of athletes ineligible was directly related to the size of the school. The clear implication was that the rate of ineligibility was directly related to decreased levels of attention being paid to students in larger schools. Educators feel such attention is particularly beneficial to the marginal student who would be the most likely candidate for poor grades.

In larger schools, the relationship of the coach and the player becomes critical. One of the best examples comes from Dade County, Florida, which is football country. When Clint Albury took over as coach of Killian High School for the 1984 season, he discovered his team's grade point average was 1.3. Horrified, he instituted a mandatory study hall. Although the eligibility standard was only a D average, Albury brought in honor students to

Table 4. Relationship of Size of School to Ineligibility Rates

Size of School	% Ineligible
less than 134	12.69%
135-284	12.85%
285-714	16.46%
715-1439	17.13%
more than 1440	23.35%

SOURCE: Theodore L. Goudge and Byron D. Augustin, "An Analysis of Suspension Rates for Texas Athletes," *Texas Coach*, March 1987. Reprinted with permission.

tutor his athletes. In specialized study hall, these students taught math and English three days a week, science and history the other two.

By the 1986 season, the team's grade point average had been raised to 2.45. No one failed a course. At the end of the season, 23 players signed with colleges and universities. This was believed to be the highest number of signed players in Dade County history (53). All were eligible under Proposition 48.

Was this a case of grade inflation? Were Killian's teachers merely marking the athletes at an easier standard? Apparently not, since all 23 did well enough as college freshmen in 1987-88 to remain academically eligible. It appeared to be a testament to Albury, who has since moved into a full-time academic position at Killian so that he could offer the program to all student athletes.

Perhaps the most startling case was that of Paul Moore. Moore was the type of player that many would say could never be eligible under a 2.0 (C average) system. According to the argument, he would be victimized by society's good intentions. In 1984 Moore was reading on a first or second grade level. Then coach Albury got him into a program for learning-disabled students. In June 1987 he graduated with an eleventh grade reading level, a 2.3 grade point average in core courses, and SAT scores of more than 700. In 1987-88, he was eligible under Proposition 48 at Florida State but was redshirted (54).

An analysis of grade potentials in Kansas showed that a full 95 percent of high school students have the capacity to obtain the C average. An argument against increased standards has been that 10

to 20 percent of students do not have the native intelligence to achieve the standard. The Kansas study showed 13 percent with IQs over 115; 68 percent with IQs of 85-115; and 13.6 percent with IQs of 70-85—possible candidates for special education but otherwise capable of maintaining the C average (55).

The Kansas findings were confirmed by the U.S. Department of Education study on participation in extracurricular activities cited in other sections of this monograph. The latter report found that 87.5 percent of male varsity athletes surveyed would have met eligibility requirements if they had been in place at the time the study was made. According to *Education Week*, "The study offers reassurance to school districts that have recently moved to require minimum grade point averages for students involved in sports . . . Requiring a C average, or 2.0 on a four-point scale, would not be a threat to many students" (56).

If what happened with the NCAA's Proposition 48 held true at the high-school level, then, with adequate warning, fewer than 5 percent could be expected to be ineligible. This result also seems to be upheld by results for high school students who became eligible after one period of suspension when they fell below the C average.

IN OTHER AREAS

When Governor White and his supporters had cited results in cities that had adopted standards of eligibility similar to those of Texas, they had been ignored. By 1986, these cities were confirming the Texas experience. It is instructive to look at three areas from different regions of the country: Los Angeles and Orange County, California; Savannah, Georgia; and Prince George's County, Maryland.

Los Angeles and Orange County

In 1982 the Los Angeles city schools announced a blanket C average requirement, with no F's allowed, as an "academic remedy for scholastically ailing students" (57). Within a year, 7 of the 15 neighboring Orange County school districts adopted some form of a C rule. The controversy was as great in the Los Angeles area as it was in Texas.

At first, coaches lined up against the new policy. Reflecting on those who might be declared ineligible, Santa Ana football coach Dick Hill said, "I think young people are being deprived of the opportunity of being captured by high school education" (58). Most of the districts (Anaheim, Fullerton [by petition], Huntington Beach, Irvine, Los Alamitos, Orange, Santa Ana, and Tustin) responded to criticism of harshness by adding a probationary period in which students who dropped below the C average would have one marking period to raise their grades before being declared ineligible.

Others complained about the no F rule. Stan Thomas, an administrator in Tustin and a former coach, emphasized that "I think the no F rule is a bad one. Will a student on a football team or the drill team take chemistry, physics, or calculus with this rule ... you'll find students reducing their workload" (59). In response, only the Brea and Santa Ana districts allowed the no F rule to be part of their standards.

The patterns of ineligibility were the same in all districts. When standards were imposed without probationary periods, teams were initially decimated. By the following year, however, the vast majority of athletes were in good academic standing.

El Toro High School, in the Saddleback Valley district, was a good example. Twelve football players were declared ineligible at the end of the first quarter. Without the players, El Toro lost in the second round of the conference playoffs. Don Walker, the principal, declared it a valuable lesson when all 12 were eligible for the following year. As Walker told a *Los Angeles Times* reporter:

We all respond to the two-by-four syndrome, and that was a two-by-four right across the head. The kids knew the requirements. But no matter what we said they didn't listen until the grades came out. Then it hit them. 60

El Toro's coaches also helped by closely monitoring the players' grades and holding mandatory study halls for those needing improvement. Walker added,

Coaches have a tremendous influence on kids. This policy has made kids much more aware through coaches. They really get on the kids and it's worked well. It's acted as motivation. (61)

In Los Angeles, the citywide figures were dramatic. Twenty-one percent of the student athletes became ineligible in the fall of the first year. Only 16 percent were still ineligible in the spring (62). Less than 12 percent were below the standard in 1986. Furthermore, there was no significant dropout rate as some critics had predicted.

Savannah-Chatham County, Georgia

The 1987-88 year marked the Savannah-Chatham County school system's fourth year with a C average in place. Those years were under the leadership of School Superintendent Ronald E. Etheridge, who said, "Here you earn the uniform in the classroom first and on the field second" (63).

In 1984-85, 274 student athletes became ineligible. A year later, only 135 in all sports were ineligible. Overall, from the first year to the second, there was a 50.9 percent improvement. As Superintendent Etheridge observed, "That says to me that when these youngsters find out that we mean business, they will rise to the occasion. High expectations will bring out high achievement" (64). He also pointed out in a speech to a committee of the Georgia Legislature:

We believe it's just a matter of setting a standard and sticking with it. In the Savannah-Chatham County public schools, having to pass a "C" average is as natural as putting on your helmet before going to the game.

Our policy lessens the likelihood of having unmotivated students playing while serious students who are enrolled in academically vigorous courses are benched.

Our policy encourages marginal students to keep trying while encouraging our academically motivated students to try new challenges. (65)

In the second year of implementation, Savannah High School won 25 games and 13 of the team's 15 players had a B average. Etheridge noted that "None had ever done that before" (66).

Etheridge felt so strongly about the results that the school board raised the minimum average from 70 to 75 in 1987. When Etheridge had become superintendent, it had been 60 (67). According to Etheridge, more athletes were eligible with a 75 average in 1987-88 than with the 60 average in 1983-84.

Prince George's County, Maryland

The experience in Prince George's County (PGC) clearly verifies three of the themes of this monograph. First, grades will improve with increased academic standards; second, those who participate in extracurricular activities do much better academically than those who do not; and third, coaches will rally to assist their players academically if standards are put in place.

At first glance, the number of ineligible students in PGC is staggering. In the first quarter of 1986-87, 41.99 percent were ineligible for extracurricular activities. By the second quarter, that figure had dropped to 35.05 percent. Unlike the data cited for the state of Texas and selected cities, however, PGC accounted for all students who would have been ineligible *if* they were participants. Statistics for the other areas were for *actual* participants who became ineligible (68).

County figures showed that only 20 percent of participants were ineligible (69). Furthermore, only 8 percent of athletes were ineligible in the second quarter cited above (when 35.05 percent of all students were ineligible) (70). This confirms the U.S. Department of Education findings cited earlier that participants in extracurricular activities generally perform better as students.

County School Board Chairman Tom Hendershot said the reform is now universally applauded:

Coaches, who initially opposed the measure in substantial numbers, now provide academic support services for their athletes. The coaches now support the standards. They have definitely been an effective motivator to improve the academic standards of our athletes. . . . The rule makes such good sense. Why did we have to wait so long until we asked more of our athletes? In Prince George's County, we once again have student athletes competing for us. (71)

HIGHER STANDARDS AND THE FUTURE

There seems to be little doubt that participation in sport *can* be a great educational vehicle to help develop the full potential of young people. Ideally, there can be much to learn from sport. It can teach self-discipline; it can teach about limits and capabilities, and dealing with failure and adversity; about teamwork and cooperation, hard work, group problem solving, competitive spirit, self-esteem, self-confidence, and pride in accomplishment.

As Brice Durbin, executive director of the National Federation of State High School Associations and a leading advocate of participation, puts it: "The philosophy behind this recommendation is based on the firm conviction that activities participation is a valuable educational experience every bit as important to the student's development as classroom experience" (72).

Although participation in sports *can* result in many good things, it is not necessarily true that each student athlete will benefit from these activities. Potential academic problems must be addressed.

It seems clear, however, that the climate for increased minimum academic standards is strong. Texas is now one of six states that require at least a C average. The other five are California, Hawaii, Mississippi, New Mexico, and West Virginia. (See Appendix A for a list of state minimum standards.) Innumerable local districts have also acted where states have not done so.

Furthermore, a national group of more than 90 prominent school superintendents, college presidents, civil rights leaders, public officials, college football and basketball coaches, well-known athletes, and professional players' association leaders have joined together to move for the adoption of academic standards for athletes on a state and/or local level. (See Appendix B.) An internal survey of the group was conducted to produce the most equitable standards. From this survey, a combination of the eligibility elements from all the existing plans emerged as follows:

1. A simple C average would be required in all subjects combined.
2. A student would be allowed one F per year as long as the average remains at the C level.

[The first two provisions were suggested to avoid a situation whereby a student could have two B's, an A, and an F and be ineligible. This happened in several districts in Texas. As long as a C average is maintained, the student could get one F per year.]

3. A student must take courses that are on a track for graduation and be making normal progress toward graduation.

[This would eliminate the fear that athletes who had to achieve a higher standard would take easier courses.]

4. There would be one probationary period. Thus, if a student dropped below a C or 2.0, the student would be on probation and not ineligible [for the first time only].

[Provision 4 speaks to the problem of adequate warning. With Proposition 48 at the college level, students had warning and most were able to bring up their grades. Since this has generally not been the case at the high school level, the probationary period would alleviate this question of unfairness.]

5. If the average continued below a C, the student would be removed from that activity until the grades improved to meet the minimum standard.
6. Once ineligible, athletes should receive academic help.

[Opponents of standards believed that ineligible athletes would drop out of school once they were out of the coaches' care. In many districts, coaches themselves have acted as grade monitors and have set up mandatory study halls and tutorial programs when they were necessary. Such programs would not add expense to school budgets if the coaches did this voluntarily as they have in many districts to date.]

7. Exceptions should be made on an individualized basis for students with extenuating circumstances.

[Most agree that provisions should be made for students with learning disabilities, English as a second language, personal tragedy, or other circumstances that might merit such consideration.]

8. Administration of the rules should be left up to each principal.

[The principals know the students better than some centralized agency. This question was the most controversial for the group surveyed.]

9. Junior high or middle school students who fall below a C average should receive nonmandatory warnings noting that if they had been in high school, they would be ineligible for extracurricular activities.

[Where standards were in place, the highest numbers of ineligible students were among freshman and junior varsity athletes. Such warnings at earlier levels would have prepared the freshman athletes better for the new standards.]

If increased standards are accepted for athletes, as this national group believes they should be, then these proposed variations will help to ease the transition and provide a fair set of standards acceptable to educators, athletes, coaches, and civil rights advocates. This remains a distant goal.

Other programs that would effectively support the student athlete include the following:

- Educational forums and assemblies for student athletes, students, coaches, teachers, and parents to sensitize them to issues faced by all those who might overemphasize any aspect of their lives. These forums and assemblies should be addressed by high-profile athletes who are role models for youngsters and can capture their attention with their message. Programs should take place all year at the schools so that the message is reinforced. Program effectiveness should be measured so that necessary adjustments can be made.
- Institutionalized educational support services that combine coaches' mandatory study halls, coaches' home visits to assess student athletes' personal needs and to involve parents in academic as well as athletic preparation, faculty involvement as academic counselors and guardians, and tutoring by other students and teachers.
- Ongoing drug and alcohol abuse programs, in addition to "say no" messages, and including discussion of performance-enhancing drugs.

The long-term effect of increased academic standards on those who engage in college sports would seem to be positive. Better preparation at the high school level resulting from increased academic demands can only mean a brighter future for student athletes once they arrive in college. John R. Davis, former president of the NCAA and professor of agriculture at Oregon State, put it simply: "For the first time, we're seeing a marked improvement in the types of athletes we're getting" (73).

More important for society as a whole, the 99 percent of high school players who will not play Division I college ball will have a better chance at whatever they choose to do because more will have been expected of them. For decades, high school and college academic leaders have asked little of athletes, perhaps subconsciously or even consciously accepting the idea of a "dumb jock" culture. Now they, too, are surprised at how quickly student athletes have improved academically when more has been demanded of them. Many are asking, "Why did we wait so long to ask?"

While many educators agreed that athletes should get special treatment, perhaps the biggest mistake was their definition of that treatment as an *exemption* from academic preparedness. It now seems obvious that we must change that definition to an *assurance* of academic preparedness.

Indeed, we must challenge all student athletes—boys and girls, whites and Blacks, football and tennis players—to meet the same academic challenges as all other students.

APPENDIXES

A. STATE ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS FOR HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ELIGIBILITY

The following list gives the state-by-state academic requirements for high school athletic eligibility as of 1987. A strong movement at local, state, and national levels is trying to raise current minimum eligibility standards, or to bring in standards where they do not already exist. As of March 1987, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, New York, and Vermont had no statewide requirements.

Alabama: Must pass four units in previous year.

Alaska: Must pass four subjects in previous semester and be enrolled in four in current semester.

Arizona: Must pass three full-credit courses in previous semester (four next year).

California: Must have a 2.0 minimum average.

Colorado: Must not fail more than one class in previous semester.

Connecticut: Must pass four subjects in previous semester.

Delaware: Must pass at least four courses in previous marking period, including two in science, math, English, or social studies.

District of Columbia: Must pass four credits in previous semester.

Florida: Requires 1.5 gpa on 4.0 scale in previous semester.

Georgia: Must pass four credit courses in previous semester and current semester (five next year).

Hawaii: Must have 2.0 minimum average in previous semester.

Idaho: Must pass five classes in previous semester.

Illinois: Must pass 20 credit hours in previous semester. Weekly certification of passing work in 20 credit hours in current semester.

Iowa: Must pass three courses in previous semester (four next year).

Kansas: Must pass five subjects in previous semester.

Kentucky: Must pass four classes in previous semester, and weekly certification in current semester.

Louisiana: Must pass five subjects, have 1.5 gpa on 4.0 scale in previous semester.

- Maine:* No statewide requirements.
- Maryland:* No statewide requirements.
- Massachusetts:* Must pass 20 credits each term.
- Michigan:* Must pass 20 credits in previous and current semesters.
- Minnesota:* No statewide requirements.
- Mississippi:* Must pass three major subjects (English, math, science, social studies) to be eligible following year.
- Missouri:* Must pass four full-credit courses in previous semester.
- Montana:* Must pass four credit courses in previous semester.
- Nebraska:* Must pass 15 credit hours in previous semester.
- Nevada:* Must be enrolled in four courses and may not be failing any course while playing sports.
- New Hampshire:* Must pass three Carnegie credits in previous marking period.
- New Jersey:* Must pass 23 credit hours in previous year. Need 11.5 credits from the previous semester for second semester.
- New Mexico:* Must have 2.0 minimum average.
- New York:* No statewide requirements.
- North Carolina:* Must pass four courses and have 75 percent attendance in previous semester.
- North Dakota:* Must pass 15 credit hours in previous semester.
- Ohio:* Must pass four full-credit courses in previous grading period.
- Oklahoma:* Must pass three full-credit courses in previous semester.
- Oregon:* Must pass at least four subjects in previous semester.
- Pennsylvania:* Must pass three full-credit courses in previous marking period (four next year).
- Rhode Island:* Must pass three academic subjects, excluding physical education, in previous marking period.
- South Carolina:* Must pass all required courses in previous semester.
- South Dakota:* Must pass 20 hours in previous semester.
- Tennessee:* Must pass four subjects in previous semester.
- Texas:* Must maintain 2.0 gpa, and not receive grade of F in previous semester.
- Utah:* Must not fail more than one class in a grading period and must make up failing grade following semester.
- Vermont:* No statewide requirements.

Virginia: Must pass four subjects in previous semester.

Washington: Must pass four full-credit subjects in previous semester.

West Virginia: Must maintain 2.0 gpa.

Wisconsin: Must pass four full-credit courses in previous grading period.

Wyoming: Must pass four full-credit subjects in previous semester and be passing in current semester.

B. NATIONAL BOARD ON INCREASED ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR ATHLETES

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Michael Dukakis, Governor, Massachusetts
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Bob Knight, Indiana University
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Craig Littlepage, Rutgers University
Frank McLaughlin, Harvard University
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John Thompson, Georgetown University

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Joe Paterno, Pennsylvania State University

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Larry Bird
Mike Bossy
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F. Don Miller, President, United States Olympic Foundation
Rachel Robinson, President, The Jackie Robinson Foundation
Burton D. Sheppard, Attorney, Sullivan and Worcester

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Acknowledgment

This monograph is based on a presentation by the author to the Los Angeles Amateur Athletic Foundation and was adapted for the Winter 1988 issue of *New Perspectives*, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

51